

WHY

FRANCE

FELL

The Lessons for Us

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WHY FRANCE FELL

THE purpose of this pamphlet is to analyse the causes of the French collapse, describe the present situation, and draw the lessons that must be learned by all who really want this war to end with a peace that will break the power of Fascism and lay the foundations for a new social and international order.

The first section paints in the background, relating the situation in France to what is happening in the rest of the world and tracing the connection between recent events and their underlying causes—all this inevitably only in outline.

The second section tries to trace as clear a picture as possible of how the situation has developed since the armistice with Hitler and Mussolini. Here, too, only brief indications can be given, but they should suffice to reveal what are the tendencies and forces at work.

The third section shows the connection between what has happened in France and what may happen here. It suggests what lessons should be drawn and what course of action advocated by progressive opinion—and in particular by the Labour Movement.

I. Why France Collapsed.

The causes of the French collapse lie deep in the structure of French society. At the same time they represent the working out in France of certain world-wide processes and forces that have long been latent in capitalist society, and that became active after the great war and aggressive after the great slump. The collapse of France is only the culminating point so far of the great Fascist offensive and the long retreat of democracy all over the world. It depends on us whether it will also mark the turn of the tide.

After the last war there was a sustained attempt, through the League of Nations and the International Labour Organisation, to found a new international order resting on an increasing measure of social justice. But the great experiment was conducted within the framework of the economic system based on private profit-making enterprise. It assumed, that is, that capitalist economics would continue to work well enough to permit of the poor using parliamentary democracy to secure more and more social reform, *i.e.*, concessions from the rich.*

* See Sir Arthur Salter's book *Recovery* for an account of how the whole post-war reconstruction effort was based on the attempt to restore pre-war liberal capitalism and how the slump showed that it was the very foundations of the economic system that had to be relaid. Sir Arthur speaks with the authority of one who was one of the leaders of post-war reconstruction.

This assumption broke down in the great slump, which brought vast unemployment in the midst of idle factories and untapped natural resources, and dire poverty in the midst of wasted plenty. The length and intensity of the slump showed there was something deeply wrong with our social system and led to an ever more insistent demand by the worst sufferers—the working class—for sweeping change.

Within the business and banking community the struggle to survive in and recover from the slump led to speeding up the process already long at work within capitalism—*i.e.*, the concentration of economic and financial power in huge trusts and combines, giant banks, monopolies, and semi-monopolies of many kinds.

With increased economic power came enhanced political influence—these vast private interests, which financed capitalist parties and made the livings of most of their leaders and M.P.s,* became a State within the State. They found it increasingly easy to make governments identify the national interest with their interests as an economic class. In other words there was a growth of plutocracy.

Plutocracy exerted its political influence through the parties and elements in the community that most readily identified the interests of big business with the interests of the nation—hence the strengthening of reaction.

Plutocracy and reaction found the best way to survive and to combat the rising challenge of the working class, stung into revolt by the slump, lay through policies of economic nationalism and war preparations, which could be justified only by appealing to fear, suspicion, and hatred.

In one country after another this process went all the way to destroying democracy and the rule of law and to substituting dictatorships based on an alliance of big business with a lower middle-class revolt against the conditions resulting from the slump. This breakthrough occurred in Italy after the first post-war slump and in Germany and Japan during the great slump. In varying degree and at varying pace the same process has operated throughout the world, so that there is not one capitalist country in which there is not a Fascist movement—although their importance varies widely—and an increasing number in both Latin America and Europe where more or less 'authoritarian' governments have been established. In all capitalist countries, too, there is a section of the plutocracy that sympathises, more or less openly and ardently, with native and/or foreign Fascism.

On the international plane these world-wide developments determined the sustained Fascist offensive and the long retreat of the democracies. Whether or not capitalist democracy can live without war preparations, imperialism and aggression, it is at any rate certain that Fascism cannot, for internal social reasons; war preparations are its economic backbone and the slogan 'believe, obey, fight'

* See *Tory M.P.* by Simon Haxey (Gollancz), for evidence.

is its spiritual essence. Plutocracy and reaction in the Western countries appeased Fascist aggressors rather than resisted them, because they felt that the social purpose of the Fascist regimes was fundamentally akin to their own and that a defeat for Fascism anywhere would end with the downfall of Capitalism everywhere. For the same class reason they were profoundly reluctant to co-operate with the Soviet Union.

Only when it became plain that Hitler and Mussolini, instead of 'playing the game' by turning their attention eastward were bent on destroying the British and French Empires, did the French and British Governments determine to fight—after sacrificing all their allies and strengthening their enemies in the name of 'appeasement'.*

* * *

The slump was not severely felt in France until the latter half of 1933. The delayed-action effect was due to the balance between agriculture and industry in French internal economy and to the partial insulation of France from the world market by high tariffs.

Even before the slump the French propertied classes were nervous. Part of them had never become reconciled to the French Revolution and all were afraid of the Russian Revolution. They remembered how in the last war, after the Russian Revolution, 17 divisions of the French Army refused to fight, part of the French fleet mutinied in the Black Sea, some officers of the French Military Mission in Moscow went over to the Bolsheviks and the French workers adopted a militant attitude. Since then the U.S.S.R., although with many painful setbacks, had survived and become powerful, and French plutocracy did not like it. They were haunted by the fear that the French workers might use their democratic rights to carry out sweeping social changes.

In the post-war years, French plutocracy increased its economic strength through concentration in huge monopoly combines like the Comité des Forges and the '200 families' behind the Bank of France. But it was conscious of its weakness, owing to France's relative economic backwardness (a great deal of small-scale industry, few big enterprises). It was ruthless and unscrupulous in politics and unashamedly corrupted civil servants, judges, deputies and journalists. It had close family and financial ties with some of the Higher Command and the upper ranks of the Clergy.

French democracy was also weak, for a variety of reasons. First, there was the importance of the peasantry. The French peasant is not so well educated as, say, the Swedish or the Danish farmer. But the French Revolution has left him a democrat and not an easy prey for Fascism, like the politically backward Central European peasantry.

* See *Why the League has Failed* and *The Road to War* by Vigilantes (Victor Gollancz) for an analysis of the connection between the slump and the drift to war.

The result was the persistence of a vast lower middle-class electorate of a socially backward type, consisting of peasants and small shopkeepers and manufacturers, petty traders and middlemen of all kinds. It was they who supplied the mass support for the amorphous Radical Socialist party, the biggest in the Chamber until the Popular Front election of 1936. This vaguely liberal party was dominated by its Right wing, which was led by slippery and often corrupt henchmen of big business, such as Georges Bonnet, Chautemps and Daladier.

The working class was weak politically because the Trades Unions (associated in the *Confédération Générale du Travail*) were 'non-political'—partly because of syndicalist traditions, partly out of conservatism—and the French Labour Movement therefore lacked the unity between the Trades Unions and the Socialist political organisations that constitutes the strength of the British Labour Party.*

Next in the Trades Union leadership to Jouhaux, an old syndicalist whose bark became disproportionately worse than his bite with age, was a certain M. Belin, who was virtually a crypto-Fascist and has now blossomed out as a Minister in the Petain puppet dictatorship.

The Socialists were split between a pacifist and violently anti-Communist section led by the Secretary, M. Paul Faure, a militant Left wing under Zyromski (with an ultra-left group under Marceau Pivert) and the orthodox majority (further subdivided into a Centre group and a Right wing) under Léon Blum. In addition the Party suffered from the complaint of Social Democrats all over Europe in the post-war years. Their traditions and leaders had been formed at a time when they were remote from the responsibilities of Power and the dread issues of war and peace, revolution and counter-revolution. The hurrying forces of change after the war pitchforked one Social Democratic Party after another into the position of having to assume the responsibilities of government in circumstances where war and revolution were at least possibilities. And in one country after another—Russia, Italy, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and then France—the Socialist leadership, when in office, simply failed to use their power out of funk. They would, in the last analysis and in the name of preserving democracy and avoiding bloodshed, surrender to reaction rather than risk having to fight counter-revolution.

Their position in France and elsewhere was not made easier by the Communists. The French C.P. had able leaders, a devoted rank and file, a good (until the German-Soviet pact) foreign policy. But it was too closely modelled on the Russian Communist Party. That is, it observed a cast-iron discipline, was conspiratorial in its attitude to the community and opportunist, not to say Machiavellian, in its tactics, and based its strategy on conformity with Soviet foreign policy. It attempted to function in a democracy as a revolutionary

* The fusion of the Red Trades Unions, under Communist leadership, with the C.G.T. did introduce a political leaven, but chiefly in the form of a struggle between the C.P., who wanted to capture the whole movement, and the old leadership.

party whose first loyalty was to a foreign government. The net result was that it showed small respect for democracy as distinct from demagoguery, was unscrupulous in its dealings with the Socialist Party and the Trades Unions (who not infrequently replied in kind), and chopped and changed so arbitrarily in its policy as to bewilder the masses whom it was endeavouring to attract.

The weaknesses of French democracy were accentuated by the Parliamentary system. The Senate, with a higher age limit and indirect election, was predominantly "Centre" (*i.e.* Right-Wing Radical-Socialist) in composition and could always deadlock the Chamber. The latter's members were elected by a majority vote with a second ballot in case no candidate obtained a majority of all the votes cast in the first ballot. The Government could not dissolve the Chamber; for this they had to obtain the assent of the President and of an absolute majority of the Senate. In nearly seventy years, the Chamber was only once dissolved during its four-year period of office.

As a result all governments were coalitions and all coalitions were unstable. The average length of life of a French Government was a year. After that there would be a regrouping of parties and factions in the Chamber, and it would fall—often to be replaced by a government composed of practically the same men in much the same posts, with a policy indistinguishable from that of their predecessors and relying on the same majority.

The impact of the slump on this situation was to increase the penchant for violence, intrigue and corruption among a section of French plutocracy and reaction. Colonel de la Rocque founded his Fascist league of the Fiery Cross (*Croix de Feu*; dissolved and reconstituted as the French Social Party). We now know, as a result of his quarrel with the reactionary ex-premier Tardieu, that de la Rocque was being paid out of the secret funds by Premier Doumergue and M. Laval, both leading representatives of French plutocracy. The renegade Communist Doriot formed the even more extreme French Popular Party. Finally, there was the sinister conspiracy of the hooded men (*les cagouleurs*) with their connections with Michelin and other big French firms, their huge stores of German and Italian arms, and their complicity in bomb outrages and the assassination of Italian anti-Fascists.

French reaction and plutocracy and the Fascist leagues took the offensive in the great riots in Paris on 6th February, 1934, when the mob came within an ace of invading the Chamber.

This was not perhaps yet counter-revolution. But it was at least a demonstration in force, a dress rehearsal for counter-revolution. Once the reaction had shown its hand in this way, the forces of the Left drew together in the Radical Socialist, Republican Socialist, Socialist-Communist coalition known as the Popular Front. Its object was to save French democracy from pluto-Fascism. The Popular Front won the 1936 general election.

But the Popular Front had many weaknesses. The Radical Socialist Right-Wing would not permit any proposals in the policy of the coalition that would have constituted steps towards Socialism.

Pressure might have been put on them if the Communists had supported the Socialists on this issue. But the French C.P. did not—it wanted a purely “liberal” programme in order to please the Radicals, whom it preferred to the Socialists, as it was competing with the latter for leadership of the working class. The crowning blunder of the Communists was to refuse to enter the Government when pressed to do so by Léon Blum. Had they been in the Cabinet the fateful decision on Spanish non-intervention might have gone the other way, and the world would be a different place to-day.

The Socialists were soon in difficulties with the Paul Faure group, who developed into 100 per cent. pacifist appeasers. And they failed again and again, out of sheer lack of courage, to stick to their principles and risk a split with the Radicals and a fight with French reaction and their British backers. They preferred to ‘appease’ their enemies, and so found themselves first manoeuvred out of power and then driven from office. They started under the stimulus of the great wave of strikes which frightened French reaction and the Senate so much that they agreed to all the Popular Front’s social legislation. But soon the Socialist leaders were more scared of the revenge of French reaction than of the militancy of the French workers, and the long retreat began.

French reaction and plutocracy, after recovering from their first panic, began a course of systematic sabotage. Ca’canny in French industry (including arms production) was accompanied by tax-dodging and the flight of capital abroad on a vast scale. This policy was deliberately intended to make the position of the Popular Front impossible. The Senate plucked up courage to throw out financial reforms which were introduced by Blum—urgent and largely non-controversial measures, which the Senate later passed for Daladier without a murmur.

In their opposition to the Government’s domestic policy, French reaction and plutocracy were powerfully assisted by the City and the Federation of British Industries in this country, and also by the Treasury. The Anglo-Franco-American agreement on currency was interpreted so as to make it impossible for France to impose exchange controls, although that would have been the only effective way to stop the flight of capital.

In foreign affairs French reaction had long played second fiddle to British Toryism. Over Manchuria Tardieu behaved like a pocket Simon. At the Disarmament Conference dishonours were even between the British and French delegations.

In 1934 Foreign Minister Barthou was assassinated together with King Alexander of Yugoslavia. The assassins were Croats who had acted with the connivance of the Italian authorities. Barthou was the last French bourgeois politician who still conducted diplomacy

in the grand manner. He concluded an alliance with the U.S.S.R. and induced that country to enter the League, as part of a long range policy of organising a system of alliances. This was still the old power politics, where the French governing class felt so confident of their own strength and of the identity of their own interests with those of the State that they could take a national view and think in terms of defending France's position in the world.

Barthou was succeeded by the astute Laval, the butcher's boy from Auvergne who started as a poor Socialist and ended as a rich near-Fascist. His was a post-slump class policy. His foreign policy, as shown in the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, was deliberately to work for the victory of Fascism, on the ground that the defeat of Mussolini would jeopardise the social order in France. The class motive was quite plainly uppermost in Laval's policy, and assumed forms not remote from treason. Laval was supported by Sir Samuel Hoare and powerful elements in the Chamberlain Government and the Tory Party. The class interest of the governing class had ceased to be identical with national defence.

The advent of the Popular Front Government coincided with the beginning of Fascist intervention in Spain. French reaction and plutocracy were violently pro-Franco and threatened to 'take the issue into the streets' if the Popular Front Government dared to grant the Spanish Republic their legal right to buy arms. Their motive was neatly summed up in the reply to a British woman M.P. at a luncheon in Paris by M. Pierre Étienne Flandin, the reactionary ex-Premier. She pointed out that the Spanish Republic wanted to be the ally of France and Great Britain, whereas Franco was the tool of the Axis, and said, "Surely you cannot want France to have the Fascist Axis on your Southern Frontier as well?" M. Flandin replied: "Why not—it is about the only way we can keep our workmen in order!"

French reaction was vastly encouraged in taking this attitude and the Fascist powers were emboldened to utter threats by the knowledge that the Chamberlain Government were strongly in favour of letting the Spanish Republic be slowly battered and starved to death by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, on straight class war grounds, masquerading as usual as pacifism and sustained, as usual, by the illusion that our Tories could 'do a deal' with one or more of the aggressors over the corpse of their victim.

In face of British pressure to yield to Italo-German blackmail, and threatened by the defection of the larger part of the Radicals and of the pacifist minority among the Socialists, Léon Blum lost his nerve and embarked on the fatal policy of 'non-intervention'. The international result we know. The internal result was to weaken, bewilder and divide the ranks of the Popular Front, to confuse and dishearten the masses, and to open the way to an offensive by French reaction all along the line, on the home front as well as the foreign front.

This offensive ended with the treason to the Popular Front of the greater part of the Radicals, who under Daladier and the banker, Georges Bonnet, formed a coalition Government with the Parties of the Right and proceeded to apply a programme that was the exact opposite of that for which the Popular Front had gained its majority at the elections. The programme was applied as an emergency measure in order to save French finances and to restore French economic life and the confidence of French plutocracy. The emergency was real enough, but it had in part been deliberately provoked by the sabotage of the French propertied classes (who, however, as they saw it, were merely protecting their property against a regime in which they had 'no confidence').

To carry out this programme the Government assumed all sorts of emergency powers and partially suspended the parliamentary system. At the same time it began to stress the need for intensive war preparations and exploited the sense of growing danger to produce an atmosphere favourable to proclaiming something like a military dictatorship in case of war. The breaking by a huge display of force, mobilising the transport workers, etc., of the 24 hours' demonstration general strike that was embarked upon somewhat hastily under Communist instigation, nominally against the reactionary social measures being adopted, actually as a protest against Munich and the sacrifice of the Spanish Republic, still further demoralised the Left and the masses and swelled the arrogance of reaction and plutocracy.

The Munich betrayal came in the midst of these developments. The main political responsibility rested with the British Government, for here, as over Spain, Abyssinia and China, Great Britain was the senior partner and France in the last analysis followed our lead. But the moral infamy of what Premier Daladier and his Foreign Minister, Bonnet, did was even greater, for Czechoslovakia was France's ally.

The effect on French national morale was devastating. There was virtually a general mobilisation, and the men who were called went in a spirit of grim resolve, hating war but keyed up to seeing it through. The issue was one on which they could understand the need for resistance, on grounds of both honour and vital interest. What they could not understand was the subsequent betrayal. Relief at being spared the ordeal this time was mingled with shame, bewilderment, and a vague sense of having been 'sold' or 'let down'. It was then one heard for the first time, from officers and men returning from the front, "*le ressort de la France est brisé*" ("the mainspring of France is broken"). There were many who said, "We were ready to fight this time, but we are not going to be fooled again."

There is no doubt that much of the stuffing had gone out of the French parliamentary system and much of the heart had gone out of French democracy before the war began. Munich was a dress rehearsal for Bordeaux.

The war was treated by French reaction and plutocracy as a heaven-sent opportunity to consolidate their power. Under the plea of military necessity Parliament was still further pushed into the background and a semi-military, quasi-dictatorship established. The Trades Unions were deprived of most of their powers "for the duration" and industrial conscription was imposed. A drastic political as well as military censorship gagged the press and the Communist Party was outlawed and savagely persecuted. Severe penalties, going all the way to death, were prescribed for anti-war propaganda and activities in which it seemed that the possession of Communist literature might be included.

The Communists had pretty well asked to be persecuted by reversing their policy and coming out as embittered opponents of the war. Preaching sabotage in munitions factories (in connection with the despatch of arms to Finland) and endeavouring to sow dissension between French and British troops and to make the French workers believe that their main enemy was 'British capitalism' were obviously not activities that could be tolerated. There was also the fear that the 70 Communist deputies could not be trusted with the secret information available to M.P.s in the course of their duties, for they would pass it on to the U.S.S.R., whence it might find its way to Germany. Nevertheless the way they were treated, especially when contrasted with the impunity enjoyed by Fascists, Cagoulards, and treasonable right-wing politicians, invested them with a martyr's crown. The failure to protest against that treatment, their uncritical and ineffectual attitude towards the proceedings of French plutocracy, and the presence in their ranks of the pacifist Paul Faure group, discredited the Socialists.

The people were loyal. The workers, men and women alike, worked long hours at low pay with all their might. The soldiers, when they were properly led and had anything like a fair chance, fought bravely. But during the nine months before the Nazi onslaught the soldiers were bored by enforced idleness, irritated by a harsh and wooden military discipline, and disgusted by the incompetence and self-indulgence of many of their officers. The more they heard of what their military and political leaders were doing in the War Office and the Cabinet, the more their confidence was undermined. Above all, they missed any clear statement of the cause for which they were bidden to fight. The French are an intelligent people, who believe in ideas. They were not given any great and inspiring idea. They disliked Fascism, but they were not wildly enthusiastic about pluto-democracy dominated by reaction.

In these circumstances Communist propaganda about this being a 'phony' war in which the French governing class were preparing once more to fool the workers had just enough truth in it to be dangerous. Some of the Nazi propaganda spread by radio and Fifth Columnists also skilfully took advantage of prevailing moods and conditions.

A big factor in the demoralisation of the masses was the conclusion of the Soviet-German Pact. This disheartened and bewildered the French militants. The consequent reversal of the Communist Party's attitude to the war increased the discomfiture of the French Labour movement and gave French reaction just the excuse to persecute that they wanted.

These are the reasons, plus the surprise at suddenly being faced by the overwhelming German superiority in tanks and planes, why large sections of the French Army, mostly under the influence of their officers, simply did not fight.

The French General Staff had prepared meticulously for glorified trench warfare as in 1914-18. Hence the Maginot line. Even this had not been built behind the Belgian frontier, partly at least in order not to offend the susceptibilities of the pro-Fascist Belgian King Leopold. The new warfare of the mechanised offensive and the 'elastic' system of defence in depth was actually discovered by a young French officer toward the end of the last war. Since then it had been developed by both the Russians and the Germans. It was tried out in their military manoeuvres and discussed in their military literature. Five years ago General (then Colonel) de Gaulle drew attention to these developments and outlined the reorganisation of the French Army that was necessary to meet the new situation. He was snubbed and his pamphlet *Vers une Armée de métier* was ignored (except by the Conservative politician, Reynaud).

The hide-bound conservatism of the French General Staff was not unconnected with the reactionary political views of most of the High Command and their close connections with French plutocracy. It was the principal factor in the French defeat.

In addition there was the sheer treason, on consciously class grounds, of part of France's political and military leadership (although, paradoxical as it may seem, the traitors sincerely believed that in capitulating they were 'saving France'—meaning thereby the social order in which they were the rulers of France).

The *Daily Telegraph* and *Times* in their *post mortems* on the French collapse both mention fear of revolution as a prime motive in the minds of Petain, Weygand and the other capitulationists.

From a well-authenticated source (a high French official at the time) comes the story of a luncheon in Paris at which Mr. Churchill met leading French Generals and politicians. In reply to a statement of his about the necessity for victory, one General observed, "Yes, of course, we must beat Hitler. But we ought not to forget that a defeat for Hitler means a victory for Stalin." No one at the table protested. That was in the first half of May.

A prominent French Conservative journalist says that he will reveal in his memoirs the name of a French Right-Wing deputy whom he heard on May 20th explaining to other reactionary M.P.s in the lobbies of the Chamber that the situation was grave, but that they must be realists and recognise that, whereas victory would mean revolution,

defeat would save France, for it would, at the cost of a certain loss of territory and prestige, preserve the social order. In reply to a question as to Petain's views, he said the aged Marshal was being worked upon and was coming round to the view he had stated.

From another good French source comes the information that the reason why General Weygand did not send a number of fresh divisions into the line when they were desperately needed to stem the German onslaught was that he wished to keep them in reserve in order to 'maintain order' in France.

A British General, who is also a Conservative M.P., and speaks excellent French, returned from Bordeaux complaining that he found Weygand far more concerned about the danger of revolution in France than about the consequences of capitulation to the Nazis.

The *Evening Standard* published the following story in the *Londoner's Diary* :—

The American war correspondent, Mr. H. R. Knickerbocker, who came to London from Bordeaux, tells me of a conversation he had with M. Laval, Marshal Petain's Vice-Premier, which sharply illuminates the attitude of the French near-Fascists. Mr. Knickerbocker was dining in the Chapon Fin Restaurant in Bordeaux the Sunday night that M. Reynaud was overthrown. M. Laval and some half-dozen friends were at a nearby table. He invited Knickerbocker to join him.

The talk turned on the proposed capitulation, and M. Laval asked Knickerbocker for his opinion. Knickerbocker replied: "If France continues to resist she will ultimately be saved by Britain and the United States, but if she capitulates, it will be the end of France for ever."

Several of M. Laval's companions nodded their heads in sorrowful agreement, but M. Laval, with a curious air of detachment in a man whose country was about to surrender, said: "You exaggerate the importance of what is happening here; Hitler's real aim is to smash Bolshevism and the Soviet Union, and that is what really matters."

The incompetence of the General Staff, due partly to the reactionary outlook of the Higher Command; the semi-conscious treason of French Conservative politicians and political generals; and the demoralisation of the masses, due partly to Communist and pacifist propaganda, more to the imbecilities of military discipline and the censorship, and most of all to confusion as to what they were fighting for and to the sense of being let down and betrayed by the Government and High Command—these were the proximate causes of the French collapse.

Perhaps there was a deeper cause for the pacifism of the masses and their rulers and for the static, passive conception of defence that came to be known as the 'Maginot line complex'. The French had a fearful blood-letting in the last war. That and the vanity of victory imbued all classes in France with a deep sense of the futility

and folly of war and a passionate desire to avoid another holocaust of French youth. French plutocracy and reaction, the traditional protagonists of power politics and imperialism, were genuinely influenced by instinctive pacifism as well as hypocritically appealing to it in order to justify their class-motived connivance at Fascist aggression and betrayal of national defence. French democracy was confused in its support of the collective system by the same instinctive pacifism and by the use made of it by the Right against their foreign policy. The net result was a weakening of the French will to play the part of a great power in world affairs and the growth of a "small power" attitude in the shape of the natural but vain desire to be left alone in their own country behind their fortified frontier.

It is not physically feasible for France to stand alone: her choice is between continuing under the German yoke and uniting with the countries that bring about and share in her liberation from Fascist tyranny. It is hardly psychologically possible to rekindle in the French people a desire to restore the Third Republic and the French Colonial Empire. When the French national revival comes—and it will come—it is more likely to take the form of a revolutionary movement, closely linked with the success of our own war effort, in touch with the other anti-Fascist movements and conducted by men who believe that France can be regenerated only by taking the lead with us, after her liberation, in building a new social and international order.

The French capitulationists were half right from their point of view: they were correct in assuming that if they abandoned metropolitan France and continued resistance from the French Colonial Empire, the only way to liberate their country from the German occupation would be through the defeat of the Nazis with the help of and followed by revolutions in France and all through Europe. They must also have realised that to make the French colonies the base for a war to liberate France was impossible without sweeping concessions to the national sentiment and social needs of the natives. That incidentally is probably the chief reason why the ultra-reactionary colonial administrations and commanders decided to be 'non-belligerent' and to recognise the Petain Government. They were thinking solely in terms of how to preserve themselves and their interests in the colonies they ruled.*

Where Petain, Laval, Weygand and their fellow travellers were wrong was in believing that by capitulation to the Fascist invader they could hang on to their property and class power. They are already too morally discredited to survive except under Nazi protection, and will soon be economically beggared and reduced to political servitude by their insatiable masters.

The old order is doomed either way. It can either drag down civilisation with it by capitulation to Fascism, or it can give way to a new social and international order erected on the ruins of Fascism.

* But see below, p. 20.

But it cannot survive. For Fascism, which began as a revolt against Socialism and internationalism, has been forced, in order to survive, to turn collectivist and to unify Europe—but on lines that destroy human freedom and dignity. The overthrow of Fascism, on the other hand, will lead through revolution to Socialism and world government on terms that may give the values of democracy and Western civilisation a new lease of life. But, either way, sweeping change is inevitable. There is no return to the pre-war world. That however is a lesson that reaction and plutocracy are by definition incapable of learning, as the experience of France once more proves.

II. France Since The Armistice

The history of France since the armistice is the melancholy story of the deepening misery and progressive enslavement to Fascism of the French people. It is also a story of treachery and moral vileness by plutocracy and reaction in France, masked, and made almost respectable or at least pathetic, by their desperate hugging of successive illusions.

The first illusion was that they could conclude an "honourable" peace with the Nazis. Here there was already an element of treachery—the public announcement that the Government were negotiating for an armistice but would accept only 'honourable' terms was partly intended to deceive public opinion. But undoubtedly there was also the belief that there was honour among soldiers and that Marshal Petain could therefore obtain lenient armistice terms from the German General Staff.

Behind this was the wider illusion that Germany and Italy would content themselves with taking most of the French colonies, Alsace-Lorraine and some territory in the South-East, but would afterwards allow the French Government to rule what was left on terms of 'relative independence'—provided they were sufficiently reactionary in their home policy and subservient in their international attitude. They even dreamed of playing off Mussolini against Hitler (a will o' the wisp that first our Foreign Office and then Mr. Chamberlain chased indefatigably from 1935 until Mussolini entered the war. Abyssinia and the Spanish Republic were sacrificed on the altar of that illusion). They thought they could form a "Latin bloc" with France and Mussolini which could become a sort of synthetic Great Power, based on a mongrel pluto-Catholic-Fascism and able to treat with Hitler on nearly level terms.

The armistice terms destroyed that illusion and were kept secret from the French people as long as possible. For they were a betrayal of the French people as well as of France's ally, Great Britain. They provided for the occupation of three-fifths of France, including her whole coast except the Mediterranean, all the richest industrial, mineral and food-growing areas, and Paris. The French air force, fleet, tanks and artillery were to be handed over to Germany and Italy,

and the French colonies were to be de-militarised—*i.e.*, rendered defenceless.

When the French Government first intimated their intention to surrender, Mr. Churchill agreed to release them from their pledge not to make a separate peace provided the French fleet were first sent to British ports. In order to curry favour with the Nazis the Petain Government broke repeated and solemn promises to this effect and undertook to hand over their fleet to Germany (nominally to be interned, actually to be used by Hitler against us).

For the same reason the Petain Government, once more ignoring British protestations and appeals, handed back to Germany 400 German aviators, most of them brought down by the R.A.F., who were prisoners-of-war in France.

To make sure that the fleet would not revolt and join us, the Petain Government quickly changed the naval high command.

The result was the battle of Oran. The British Admiralty, in pursuance of a Cabinet decision, offered the French fleet anchored at Oran the choice between four alternatives: To join us; to scuttle their ships; to sail under escort to a French West Indian port and remain there for the duration; or to intern their ships in the U.S.A. On these alternatives being refused, we proceeded to sink or capture these ships to prevent them falling into German hands.

This was a grievous and bitter necessity. It has been fully exploited by German and Petain propaganda (which suppressed all mention of the last two of the four alternatives offered the French Admiral, and of course said nothing of the broken pledges that made the incident inevitable) to sow hatred of their old allies among the French people.

When General Weygand was preaching surrender behind the scenes he used as his main argument the contention that the British Government too were preparing to capitulate, and that in any case if they attempted to resist the German onslaught they could not last a fortnight. Marshal Petain's main justification for his shameful surrender was the half-truth that France had been let down by the tardiness and inadequacy of the British war effort.

Anti-British propaganda has become the moral mainstay of the Petain regime. This propaganda is partly to please the Germans. Partly it is due to the need for a scapegoat to distract the attention of the people from the real causes of their misfortune. (Jew-baiting and the trial of the French statesmen who have been anti-Fascist and anti-appeaser spring from the same motive.) But mostly it is dictated by the instinct of self-preservation: Petain, Weygand, Laval and the rest know that their physical survival depends on Great Britain losing the war. For if we were to win, every shred of justification for the betrayal of France and the destruction of French democracy would disappear, and no power on earth could save the authors of France's misfortune from being torn to pieces or lynched—or, if they were very lucky, tried and guillotined—by their infuriated countrymen.

The Petain regime has abolished the French constitution and parliamentary system, and replaced it by a triumvirate, in which power is nominally concentrated in the person of the Prime Minister and Head of the State (84-year old Marshal Petain), but actually in those of his deputy, the astute and sinister Pierre Laval. There are vague schemes for forming some kind of consultative Chamber, based not on constituencies but on occupations (like the Fascist corporations). Only one party is to be allowed. The French C.G.T. (T.U.C.), whose assistant secretary, always an extreme Right-winger and semi-Fascist, M. Belin, has become Petain's Minister of Labour, has proclaimed that it renounces the class struggle as the basis of its activity and is amalgamating with the employers' organisation on approved Fascist lines.* The principles of the French Revolution, liberty, equality, fraternity, that have stirred men's hearts like an army with banners, have been 'abolished' and replaced by a Fascist slogan: "Labour, the family, the nation". The Marseillaise too, it is announced, is to be banned and replaced by a "non-revolutionary" national anthem.

The elderly arch-reactionary Ybarnegaray, an adherent of Colonel de la Roque, has founded a Youth League, which was recently addressed by the Catholic reactionary Chateaubriant. In a purely Fascist manifesto, he bade them join in the "national revolution", which was not political, because politics were dead and there would be no more politicians, but 'sacred', for it was based on a new way of life, inspired by duty, honour, patriotism, religion, and would build a new society. As one step towards this new society the Petain regime have made two-piece, knee-length bathing suits compulsory for both men and women!

This regime is not yet Fascism, for it is too senile and silly. It is more like the Hindenburg-Von Papen pre-Fascist regime of reaction in Germany (the parallel between the two octogenarian Marshals, Hindenburg and Petain, become in their dotage unconscious traitors and tools of sinister forces, is striking). It is still more like the pluto-Fascist hybrid regime evolved by General Franco, whom indeed Petain admires and is taking as his model.

But the regime is being pushed toward Fascism, both by elements within (the renegade Socialists Adrien Marquet and Marcel Deat, who stand more or less where Mosley did when he was just changing from being leader of his 'New Party' into a full-blown Fascist) and by pressure from without.

The one thing certain is that it is utterly incapable in any circumstances of resisting the will of its Nazi conquerors for one single instant.† It is therefore idle to dream of finding any 'patriotic

* In this connection M. Jouhaux has resigned and other men have come to the top on whose future activity it may be wise to suspend judgment.

† Cf. Mr. Churchill in the House on August 20th: "A puppet Government set up at Vichy which may at any moment be forced to become our foe."

elements' in the Petain camp who would desire to work with us against Fascist subjugation, or to cherish the delusion that we can 'appease' the Petain regime into even checking its slide into the abyss of vassalage ending in the darkness of extinction. There are no 'deals' or half-way houses possible, either for the Petain regime with the Nazis or for our Government with the Petain regime.

For the Nazis, who are the masters of the situation in France, are bent on the complete subjugation and unification of the country under the rule of their puppets. They are carrying out a merciless economic exploitation of the occupied territories, which are being plundered of foodstuffs, raw materials and industrial products. They have imposed complete control of the wireless and the press, threaten with the death penalty anyone listening to the foreign wireless or even bringing in a newspaper from unoccupied France, and have unleashed the Gestapo.

Alsace-Lorraine has been virtually annexed and is being 're-Germanised' in anticipation of the peace terms. Brittany has been made 'autonomous'. The German and Italian press and wireless keep on threatening France with drastic peace terms that will once for all make France helpless to resist the will of her conquerors. The German wireless in German expatiates on the 'degeneracy' of France and the unfitness of that country to enjoy national independence.

The German wireless in French on the other hand expounds the doctrine that France will find peace and security in a Continental bloc with Germany, denounces England, and paints a glowingly false picture of the blissful condition of the German working class in the National Socialist State. The Paris newspapers, which are now a mere reptile press in the pay and under the control of the Nazis, are running a campaign of social demagoguery exactly resembling that of the early days of the Fascist campaigns for power in Germany and Italy, and designed, like them, to attract the support of the petty bourgeoisie and the workers.*

This campaign includes violent denunciation of the Petain Government. The latter is also denounced by the German press and wireless. Its existence is being made as difficult as possible: A humble request to be allowed to return to Paris and 'govern' unoccupied France from the capital occupied by Germany was refused. The two-fifths of France left to Petain is the poorest part of the country and has never been self-supporting in food. It is now crammed with 8,000,000 refugees from other parts of France. The Nazi authorities have erected a virtually impassable wall between this poverty-stricken, over-populated area, threatened by chaos and famine, and occupied France. They refuse to allow food to go into that area, or refugees to return from it.

This policy, taken in conjunction with the press campaign and

* A new paper—*La France Au Travail*—attacks plutocracy, high finance, the Jews and Free Masons, the Petain regime, etc., and strikes an "anti-capitalist" and "revolutionary" note.

political manœuvres in Paris, can mean only that it is the deliberate intention of the Nazis to reduce unoccupied France to such a desperate plight that the Petain regime will founder and the population will accept a straight Fascist regime for the whole of France imposed by their conquerors. The most likely candidate, as leader (with the ex-left-wing intellectual, Gaston Bergery, as runner-up), is the renegade Communist Doriot, now an out-and-out Fascist and head of the French People's Party. He is a man with more than average courage, intelligence and dynamism, and withal corrupt, ruthless and unscrupulous and driven by the seven devils of an over-weening ambition.

For a time the Nazi-Fascist policy is likely to succeed. For the French people are shell-shocked. They are so utterly demoralised and bewildered by what has befallen them that they have lost heart and lost their bearings. They will take some months to recover, and will for a time, in part, be easy prey for the campaigns of Anglo-phobia, anti-Semitism, and legends about the invincibility of Nazi Germany with which their confused and tired minds are now being poisoned.

But the French people are the heirs of French civilisation and not the raw stuff out of which Fascist dictatorships are made. They will rebel against hunger, tyranny and humiliation. They have been pitchforked into a revolutionary situation after several generations of tolerably working democracy. They must therefore re-acquire the revolutionary psychology and re-create the revolutionary cadres (which, for instance, the Czechs and Poles never lost). That will take time, and it will not be easy. But it will come.

Revolt in France will grow in proportion as the French people acquire confidence that we will hold out, and intend to go on fighting until we liberate Europe from Fascist tyranny as the only way to preserve our own national independence. That knowledge will also kill the anti-British propaganda and revive the sense of fraternity between our two peoples.

Outside Metropolitan France there are the French colonies and groups of Frenchmen who have come to this country to continue the fight. The most important of the latter is the organisation of General de Gaulle. Originally it was believed that there would be a French Government formed of prominent French politicians who would continue the fight from the French colonies rather than surrender. General de Gaulle looked upon himself as merely the advance representative in London of an overseas French Government that was to come and of a French Empire that would continue to fight.

The French colonies did not continue the fight and arrested those French politicians who attempted to go over-seas. Why did not the colonies fight? Curiously enough the answer may be found in a statement appearing in the *Spectator* of August 2nd as to why the colonies were expected to fight.

The statement, entitled *Free France's Aims, by a Free Frenchman*, and, judging by internal evidence, written by someone in close touch with the de Gaulle organisation, observes that :

“Everywhere in the Empire the father or the grandfather of the colonial Frenchman of 1940 shed his blood, arms in hand, for something which the son or grandson owns today. So it comes that this field, this plantation, this business, this house, is both real and personal to the Frenchman of the Empire. . . . The Frenchman of the Empire would fight to his last breath the German or, still more readily, the Italian attacker of his Imperial property. He could say that the overseas territories never were considered as a whole, as a solid block of action and influence, but as a thin chain, a poorly-connected succession of local interests.”

Undoubtedly the writer is correct in assuming that the dominant motive of the colonial administrations and commanders is to assure their power and property as the master class in the colonies, and to defend them against all comers. The French North African colonial governors, officials and military commanders are reactionaries, anti-democrats and pro-Fascists almost to a man. But it is precisely because they start with this premise that they end by concluding that on the whole it is a lesser evil to take their chance of coming to terms, either through the Petain Government, or, if that fails, directly with the Fascist powers, and even to try to survive under Fascist annexation, rather than to attempt resistance. For what is the alternative ?

Hitherto French colonial rule has rested, not primarily on the affection of the natives for those who have thrust themselves upon them, but mostly on the prestige of France. That means on the knowledge that any military effort or establishment in the colonies was only part of the much greater military organisation of metropolitan France, which would support the colonies if they got into trouble and chastise them if they made trouble.

Most of that prestige has disappeared with France's defeat, and there are already stirrings among the natives, fanned by Fascist colonial demagogy, which is quite as violent and unscrupulous as their social demagogy.

The last remnants of French prestige as their moral support would disappear if the colonial governors were to raise the standard of revolt against the Petain Government. In that case they would be thrown entirely on their own resources, moral as well as material. And if they revolted in order to make war, they would have to rely wholly on native troops raised in their own colonies. But in the name of what are they to appeal to these troops and put arms in their hands ? The Arabs of Syria and Tunis, the Berbers of Morocco, even the Senegalese and the Algerians, would soon begin to ask what they were fighting for, would demand concessions to their national sentiment and social needs, and might eventually throw down their

arms or turn them against their rulers if they did not get what they wanted. They would fight, and fight well, if concessions were made to them. For they have no love for Italian or German Fascism. But that would mean the beginning of the end of what the French Imperialists desire to defend.

Some such calculation must have been in the backs of the minds of France's colonial rulers when they too decided to capitulate and to demobilise their forces. But their dilemma is acute, for in the long run the old order in the colonies cannot be saved by capitulation any more than by resistance to Fascism. Now that the war has spread to Africa and we are encouraging the Abyssinians to revolt while the Italians are trying to stir up revolt in our colonies, all sorts of forces are being released that will make the position of French Imperialism increasingly difficult. It is even possible that at some stage joining in the war on our side may seem to one or more French Colonial governors as the best way to defend the old colonial order.*

The failure of the French colonial empire to revolt has put General de Gaulle in a difficult and ambiguous position. The General is a man in the prime of life (49), of complete integrity, of the highest courage and patriotism, and of great perspicacity in military matters—he was the only senior French officer to understand the new forms of warfare invented by the French and Russians and perfected by the Germans. But in his personal views he is a romantic Medievalist, with a pre-capitalist, almost Chestertonian outlook. In political matters he is naive and inexperienced, tending to be a prisoner of the organisation he has created and in danger of political pressure from a section of the Tory Party.

The de Gaulle organisation is purely military and composed of officers. It is dominated by regulars, General Staff officers and blue-blooded young cavalry officers, graduates of St. Cyr Military Academy, and so forth. Its political complexion is much what might be expected of a body so composed: A strong dislike of all 'politics' and 'politicians', on the ground that it is they who have betrayed France and that only the military can save France. Those who adopt this attitude consider it 'non-political'. It is not in fact neutral politically. It is an anti-democratic political attitude.

A certain section of the Tory Party, not unconnected with the extreme right in the Cabinet, has been endeavouring to put pressure on the de Gaulle organisation not to do or say anything too offensive to the Petain regime (which has condemned General de Gaulle and his adherents to death and confiscated their property). This pressure coincided in time with the remarkable mildness with which Mr. Churchill treated the Petain Government in his public statements,

* Since this was written, France's Central African Colonies have come into the war. But these tropical territories inhabited by primitive negroes, will not have to do any fighting themselves and were badly hit by our blockade. The handful of whites in them were not therefore faced by the painful dilemma of France's North African Colonies.

contrasting sharply with the justified bitterness with which he had previously referred to its betrayal of France and of this country.

This is one more manifestation of the ceaseless search of our reactionaries for allies against Hitler among European reactionaries. For a long time they dreamed of a deal with Reichswehr Generals, German big business men and 'moderate' Nazis, in order to overthrow Hitler and restore the good old days of the Prussian militarism which we fought the last war to overthrow. Then they were going to separate Mussolini from Hitler and would successfully appease Franco. And now they are haunted by a vague hope of forming some sort of combination of French colonial governors, 'patriotic elements' in the Petain Government, General de Gaulle, and perhaps the French pretender to the throne (of whose very existence nine Frenchmen out of ten are unaware), in order to form a regime that would at one and the same time be prepared to resist Hitler and be friends with us in international affairs, while safely reactionary in home affairs.

This policy is simply appeasement in new forms. It is a disastrous illusion, rooted in the split minds and divided loyalties of Tories who cannot see straight because their minds are conditioned against accepting the fact that they cannot today serve their country without sacrificing the interests of their class. And so they seek any combination, however cloudy and fantastic, to put European reaction on its legs again in opposition to Fascism, although reaction cannot live if it quarrels with Fascism, and has precisely for that reason succumbed to and is being swallowed up by Fascism. The one thing these Tories will not do is to commit us to supporting the underground revolutionary movements in Europe that are the only real anti-Fascist forces and the only trustworthy allies.

The right attitude to adopt to the de Gaulle organisation—and one with which the General would, to judge by his published statements, very readily concur if he could resist the views of his own organisation and certain Tory pressures—results from the policy we should pursue towards France. That policy is discussed in the concluding section of this pamphlet. It is foreshadowed, and the attitude toward the de Gaulle organisation that flows from it is indicated, in the following unofficial and unauthorised but substantially accurate summary of the views of a group of French journalists and former high officials, constituted under the name of the "French Centre of Political and Economic Studies".*

"We honour General de Gaulle for his courage and patriotism. We recognise his value as the symbol of France's will to resist, as the man who picked up the Tricolour when it had been dropped in the mud by traitors. We appreciate the importance of the service he is performing in recruiting and leading the French soldiers, sailors, airmen and technicians,

* Who are now editing the French Daily *France*.

who want to go on fighting. We shall seek the maximum cooperation with the General's organisation in all our press and publicity work, because we desire to help him in every way we can.

"But the salvation of France cannot come from Frenchmen outside, however distinguished. The efforts of all of us emigres can be only auxiliary and subsidiary to the real forces, which are on the one hand the impact of Britain's war effort on the power and prestige of the Nazis, and on the other the development of a revolutionary movement in France.

"The revolutionary forces exist in embryo, but will take months to grow into formidable strength. Their growth will be closely dependent on the success of Britain's war effort.

"We wish to establish contacts with the nascent revolutionary movement in France and to assist it in every possible way. But to do that we must remain independent of General de Gaulle's organisation. For the anti-Fascist forces in France are democratic and centre largely on the working class. In their eyes the French officer caste and General Staff are as completely discredited as the politicians. They consider that French militarism must join reaction, plutocracy and Fascism, on the scrap heap of history, and that the military leadership has at least as great a responsibility for the failure of France as the civilian leaders. The traitors-in-chief were Marshal Petain and General Weygand. These two and the historic figure of General Boulanger have made political generals anathema to the French people. To attempt to establish contact with an anti-Fascist revolutionary movement in France in the name of General de Gaulle would be to court a rebuff. Therefore General de Gaulle has an honourable and important part to play as a military leader who will fight by the side of our British allies until France is free and will then step aside and let the French people determine their own future. But it would be disastrous if he were pushed into assuming any political function or if his organisation came to be regarded as in any way an embryo government. It is, and should remain, simply a military mission."*

III. France, Ourselves and Peace.

The lesson that emerges from the events recorded in the preceding pages is that this country shares the responsibility for the downfall of France and may share her fate unless we learn from her experience.

* Even if, as seems certain sooner or later, General de Gaulle goes to Africa to fight, it would not mean that those who wish him to head a government in the French Colonies with the idea of later extending it to Metropolitan France have abandoned their project. On the contrary.

We share the responsibility because the foreign policy that has brought France to this pass was the common policy of both countries. Indeed on the major issues that have proved the milestones on the road to war and defeat—Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain and Czechoslovakia—Great Britain was the dominant partner and bore the major share of the political responsibility. Even in French domestic affairs the influence of the British Treasury, the City and the F.B.I. has been constant and considerable and has operated on the side of French reaction and plutocracy.

The leisurely and half-hearted way the Chamberlain Government set about organising our war effort was partly responsible for the French defeat as well as for the Anglo-French disaster at Dunkirk. Our War Office had proved just as obstinately blind to the nature of modern war as their French colleagues. The best one can say in our defence in this connection is that no one expected any prodigious intellectual effort by the War Office and everyone had implicit faith in the excellence of the French General Staff. We left the command of the Allied forces on land to the French, whereas they put their Navy under our orders and the two air forces co-operated on an equal basis.

The number of troops sent to France in the first nine months of the war and the assistance rendered by the R.A.F. both exceeded what the British Government had promised France—but both proved woefully inadequate to the real needs of the situation.

Our war production during those nine months of complacency, fatuity, brag and bluster for which the Guilty Men still in the Government bear such a deadly responsibility, left the French as well as our own Army unprovided. And the French had mobilised everyone up to the age of 50, had conscripted labour, and were working long hours, while this country took things easily—hence much French bitterness, fully exploited by Fascist and Communist propaganda.

The interdependence of the two countries goes back all the way to the founding of the Entente Cordiale in 1904, has been growing steadily ever since, and is today well-nigh complete in the sense that without the liberation of France the survival of this country as a great power is impossible and as an independent nation difficult. The Entente was founded as a recognition by the governing classes of the two countries of the fact that neither was any longer strong enough to defend its vested interests abroad—*i.e.* its Empire—alone against the rising challenge of the Central European bloc—Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Italy—and so the two must hang together or they would hang separately. The Franco-Russian alliance and the Anglo-Russian Entente were concluded for the same reason. In those days it was the plutocracy—the Anglo-French governing class—that had an active and positive foreign policy. The two democracies were vaguely isolationist and pacifist.

During the 1914-1918 war the Anglo-French Entente was converted into an alliance which developed into a degree of military and

economic co-operation that went half-way to a union between the two countries. This was broken up after the war owing to the desire of French and British big business to get rid of all forms of State control and to go back to untrammelled private enterprise in the pursuit of profits, and because of the general unwillingness of British, and particularly of Tory, opinion to accept any mutual defence obligations on the Continent.

After the Peace Conference Anglo-French interdependence took the new form of a partnership within the League of Nations in building up the new system of collective security against aggression, with its concomitants of arbitration, reduction and limitation of armaments by international agreement, and political and economic cooperation. These policies achieved a measure of success until the great slump, when the collective system foundered in the waves of revolution and counter-revolution, aggression and appeasement, raised by the partial collapse of capitalism.

During this period it became clear that the Anglo-French partnership had assumed a double form. On the one hand there was the co-operation of the two democracies, and particularly of their Trades Union and Socialist Movements, in a positive and active foreign policy centring on the collective system. The defence of this system became more and more clearly identified with upholding democracy, revolution and colonial peoples struggling to be free (China, Abyssinia, Czechoslovakia, Spain) as well as co-operating with the U.S.S.R. against Fascist counter-revolution, imperialism and aggression.

Precisely for this reason reaction and plutocracy on both sides of the Channel began to co-operate more and more intimately for the purpose of striking bargains with Fascist Imperialism and aggression at the expense of their victims and of the collective system. This policy masqueraded as isolationism and pacifism. At the same time the Anglo-French Right wanted an Anglo-French alliance to defend their Imperial possessions against the Fascist bloc—but they would not co-operate with the U.S.S.R. for this purpose.

It was that policy that landed the two great Western democracies in this war, without allies and pitted against enemies that had been appeased into formidable strength. It is now clear that unless we can end the war by liberating France—and that means the overthrow by their own peoples of the Nazi regime and their pluto-Fascist vassals all over Europe, for Hitler could not survive if driven out of France—we shall leave the whole Continent under Hitler. After that we could no longer defend the British Empire against the Fascist rulers of Europe, nor have governments or policies or a press of which Hitler strongly disapproved.

In short unless we liberate France and unite with her afterwards, we may share France's fate. The same world forces, released by the slump, that undid France are working here to similar conclusions and must be defeated on the home front as part of the job of winning the war. Plutocracy and reaction here are in part just as half-hearted

about waging the war and just as anxious to take advantage of the war in order to rivet chains on the British workers as their opposite numbers in France.

The abortive attempt to impose a political censorship and the talk of abolishing the newspapers and replacing them by a single official sheet (a worthy successor to the *British Gazette* that won the hatred and contempt of the working class during the general strike in 1926); the powers taken by the Home Secretary to close down newspapers and printing presses, without right of appeal; the silly stunt of a Silent Column, and the sinister prosecutions for "making statements calculated to spread alarm and despondency"; the horrible treatment meted out to staunch friends and proven anti-Fascist fighters among the refugees; the literally unmentionable Swinton Committee—these reveal the state of mind of a powerful section of the ruling class.

At the time of General Ironside's relegation from the post of Commander of the Home Defence Forces to a more ornate but practically unimportant sphere, there were cautious hints in the press of a desire in some parts of the War Office for a military dictatorship. Mr. Lloyd George tells the story, in Vol. V of his *War Memoirs*, of how in the last war some War Office Generals and Tory politicians, with Col. Repington, the *Times* military critic, as go-between, intrigued and plotted to overthrow the Government and establish a military dictatorship. He added that they did not hesitate to resort to High Treason, by publishing the Allies' plan of campaign, in order to gain their ends. There is little doubt that part of the plutocracy and military leaders of this country would like to imitate the example of their opposite numbers in France and do what their predecessors just failed to achieve in the last war.

There is a quality of malignant imbecility about the manhandling of refugees in particular that bears the unmistakable imprint of the military mind when aroused. Mr. H. G. Wells, in an interesting article in *Reynolds*, argued that the policy adopted towards refugees was not just a foolish mistake, the action of Blimps in a blind panic, but was the expression of a deliberate purpose: The desire *not* to fight a war of revolutionary liberation; the indiscriminate internment of aliens not out of ignorance as to the difference between Fascists and anti-Fascists, but because the latter, being potential revolutionaries, are regarded by the Brass Hats as at least as objectionable as the former. Those responsible for the anti-refugee policy want to fight this war as gentlemen, not to win it as the allies of revolutionaries. To have the war end with the revolutionary overthrow of Fascism seems to them just as dreadful a prospect as a Fascist victory.

This attitude leads straight to the desire for a compromise peace with Hitler on the ground that victory is virtually impossible and in any case undesirable because it would bring revolution, and that deadlock is better than defeat. Mr. Lloyd George, who until 1936 was the open advocate of supporting the Nazi regime because it was a barrier against social revolution in Europe, cast a bright light on this

mentality in his article in the *Sunday Pictorial* of July 28th, 1940. He recalled the fact that he had in the first weeks of the war been in favour of a Peace Conference because he thought we had enough assets—the Maginot line, the French Army and the British Navy and the Allied Air Forces and vast resources—to enable us to bargain with Hitler on level terms. Today Hitler held all the trumps, and would insist on a conqueror's peace. Therefore negotiation was impossible. But tomorrow, after the failure of his attack on this country and when our air force had begun to outstrip Germany's and American help had become substantial, we should again be strong enough to bargain with Hitler as equals. Then we could negotiate.

The assumption behind this view is quite clearly that we should leave Hitler in charge of the Continent provided he leaves us in possession of the Empire (with perhaps one or two French colonies thrown in) and once more directs his attention Eastward.

Mr. Lloyd George is on the extreme Left of those who hold this view. But until the outbreak of the war it was substantially the view of my Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere and of those responsible for pro-Fascist and anti-Soviet appeasement. It is still the view of the Imperial Policy Committee and Lord Elibank. And they are conscious of its close kinship to the attitude of the French capitulationists, for they have explicitly defended the surrender of the Petain regime on the ground that its motives were laudable, being solely to save "Christianity and property" from Bolshevism.

Just as Petain, Weygand and Laval, cherished the illusion that they could secure "honourable terms" from Hitler, so our ex-appeasers conceal from themselves the fact that the kind of "deal" they hanker after would mean surrender to Fascism at one remove—for Hitler would not keep his word to leave us alone, we should be physically unable to resist him single-handed, and our appeasers would go on operating as a 5th Column on the ground that concessions and surrenders continued to be preferable to relying on the British workers, Continental revolutionary movements and an understanding with the U.S.S.R., in order to make resistance successful.

A large part of our Tories just will not face the fact that revolution is the price of victory. They cannot take it. And yet unless we can rally the forces of revolution in the countries under Hitler we really cannot win the war.

For Fascism stands for an idea, or rather the caricature of an idea. It is counter-revolution masquerading as revolution; super-imperialism posing as internationalism; a slave economy claiming to provide social justice. Hitler says he has unified Europe and abolished unemployment, whereas Great Britain is run by a plutocracy that is fighting to restore the economic anarchy and international anarchy that have bred the ills with which the world is afflicted. There is just enough truth in this claim to fool some of the people. In any case a section of the ruling classes in the conquered countries have embraced Fascism, which enables them to survive, albeit on

humiliating and precarious terms, as the only alternative to extinction through revolution.

In these circumstances we cannot break Hitler's hold on Europe except by opposing him with a plan for a new social and international order that will give hope and purpose to the peoples under the Fascist yoke. Even then they will not revolt until Fascist prestige is shattered and the Fascist war machine crippled by our Army, Navy and Air Force. But we cannot, by military and air action and the blockade alone, drive Hitler out of the countries he has occupied and smash his Continental system. For that to happen our war effort must be seconded by revolutionary movements in the invaded countries.

To succeed the revolutionaries need political as well as military assistance. We must help them by utilising their nationals in our midst as agents and go-betweens, and providing training facilities for 5th Columnists on our side. Above all we must enable our revolutionary allies to say two things: That we, in concert with the Americans, have plans ready for rushing food to the populations of Europe the moment they free themselves from Fascist tyranny. And that we are fighting this war to liberate Europe from Fascism and to join with the liberated nations in a European Union based on democracy and social justice.*

A revolution cannot succeed unless, in addition to the negative aim of overthrowing the existing order, the revolutionaries have an ideal, a programme, a positive purpose.† It is our job to give the

* In his speech in the House on August 21st, Mr. Churchill made two statements directly relevant to these two points. After explaining why it would merely strengthen Hitler's hands to feed any of the populations in the territory the Nazis had over-run, Mr. Churchill said: "Let Hitler bear his responsibilities to the full and let the peoples of Europe who groan beneath his yoke aid in every way the coming of the day when that yoke will be broken. Meanwhile we can, and will, arrange in advance for the speedy entry of food into any port of the enslaved area when this port has been wholly cleared of German forces and has genuinely regained its freedom. We shall do our best to encourage the building up of reserves of food all over the world so that there will always be held up before the eyes of the peoples of Europe, including—I say it deliberately—the German and Austrian peoples, the certainty that the shattering of the Nazi power will bring to them all immediate food, freedom and peace. . . ."

"The fact that the British Empire stands invincible, and that Nazidom can still be resisted, will kindle again the spark of hope in the breasts of hundreds of millions of downtrodden and despairing men and women throughout Europe, and far beyond its bounds, and from these sparks there will presently come a cleansing and devouring flame."

This reliance on revolution in Europe, and on an anti-famine policy and our own war effort to promote the revolutionary movement, is gratifying. But Mr. Churchill appeared unconscious of the need for social and imperial reform and an enlightened foreign policy if we are to assume the leadership of anti-Fascist revolutionary movements on the Continent.

† For a discussion of this point see the excellent Gollancz 2s. 6d. book, *100,000,000 Allies—If We Choose*, by "Scipio," and the equally excellent little 3d. pamphlet published by Federal Union under the title *How We Shall Win*.

lead by pledging ourselves to the policy of a Union of free nations. In doing that we shall incidentally give a tremendous impetus to the movement in the U.S.A. for helping us. And we must be realistic enough to accept the fact that our policy necessitates an agreement with the U.S.S.R., without whose co-operation it will not be possible to reach any settlement in post-Fascist and revolutionary Europe.

If then we are to profit by French experience and to will the means as well as the end when it comes to winning the war, there are certain things we must do: First remove from the Government the Guilty Men, those chiefly responsible for the pro-Fascist appeasement policy during the last nine years of peace and for the woeful inadequacy of our war preparations during the first nine months of the war.* So long as they remain in the Government they queer our pitch in the U.S.A., for their presence is now the staple argument of Americans against trusting our integrity of purpose. They hamper the organisation of our war effort and lower public morale by opposing moves towards social justice and favouring the vested interests of property. They prevent any mobilisation of the revolutionary forces on the Continent by their ill-treatment of aliens, their opposition to any clear and full statement of our war aims, and their refusal to make any serious effort to come to terms with the U.S.S.R. Last but not least, they may, if not put out of harm's way in time, do a Petain on us.

Second, we must demand that the Government should proclaim that we are fighting to liberate Europe, that our offer of an Anglo-French Union still stands, that we shall submit that offer to the French people so soon as they are free, and that we will take part in a union of European nations. That union requires Anglo-French unity as a preliminary condition. To give substance to this statement of policy a 1940 equivalent of the 1916 Phillimore Committee† should be appointed, to draft a project of European Union and settle the relations between this closely knit organisation and a loose world-wide association of States, incorporating the remnants of the League, on the one hand, and taking account of the structure and problems of the British Empire on the other.

Since the Nazis and Fascists make a particular point of saying that what they are out to destroy in Europe are the principles of the French revolution, as they are the root of all that has gone wrong in Western civilisation, we could make our challenge to Fascism dramatic by saying that we were out to re-conquer Europe for the immortal principles of liberty, equality and fraternity.

Liberty today means the liberation of all nations under the Fascist yoke and the right to government by elected representatives

* What they have done and why they must go is made horrifyingly and unanswerably clear in *Guilty Men*, by Cato (Gollancz, 2s. 6d.). This is a book that all should read.

† Appointed by the Government to go into the whole question of a League of Nations. It drew up the first official draft of the Covenant.

of the people ; the right of freedom of speech, press and association ; the rule of law impartially administered ; and to make these rights effective it means also the right to work, to a minimum wage, to free education and to free care of the sick, the aged, and those unable to work.

Equality means the equality of all peoples and minorities and an end to the obscene practice of racial persecution and the silly superstition of racial superiority. It means the emancipation of colonial populations under international supervision. And it means social justice, a levelling of the great disparities of wealth and opportunity that make a mockery of democracy.

Fraternity means the union in some form of Federation of the peoples willing to base their national life on these principles. Anglo-French unity is an essential element of this Union, for without France it would be extremely difficult for us to assume these Continental responsibilities.

If we pledge ourselves to these purposes, we shall be in a moral position to lead a European revolution. But if we will the end we must will the means. We must press not only for the Government pledging themselves to definite war aims but making a reality of these pledges by removing the Guilty Men from office, pursuing an enlightened Imperial and Social policy (beginning with immediate and adequate concessions to Indian Nationalism), and utilising to the utmost the friendly Germans, Austrians, Italians, Czechs, Poles, Belgians, Dutch, Norwegians, Frenchmen (and soon perhaps Spaniards) in our midst. There should be no illusions about the fact that none of these things is in the least likely to come to pass except as a result of unremitting and unrelenting pressure by progressive opinion and particularly by organised Labour. Eternal vigilance is still the price of liberty and the war remains a war on two fronts—the social as well as the international front. It would be wrong to be cast down as to our prospects of winning the war ; but it would be foolish to be optimistic. It will be long and hard-fought. It will call for every ounce of energy, clear-sightedness and steadiness of purpose of which we are capable.

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